

MARY MARSHAL

MARY RAYMOND SHIPMAN ANDREWS
AUTHOR OF THE PERFECT TRIBUTE, THE BETTER TREASURE, ETC.
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SYNOPSIS.

Francis Beaupre, a peasant babe of three years, after an amusing incident in which he had been the cause of a quarrel between his father and a neighbor, was taken to the Chateau of France by the Emperor Napoleon, who prophesied that the boy might one day be a marshal of France under another Bonaparte. At the age of ten Francis visits General Baron D'Amboise, who is the boy's godfather, and is taken to the Chateau. The boy becomes a favorite of the general and is taken to the Chateau. The boy becomes a favorite of the general and is taken to the Chateau. The boy becomes a favorite of the general and is taken to the Chateau.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.—Continued.

"Mademoiselle Lucy," he said. "I have something to ask of you."
"I will do it," Lucy promised blithely, not waiting for details.
Francis laughed. "You trust one, Mademoiselle Lucy—that is plain. Then his face became serious. 'Do you remember a talk we once had together when I told you of my old playmate, Alix?'"

The bride-to-be flushed furiously as she recalled that talk. Then she nodded in a matter-of-fact manner. "I remember very well," she said. "It was when I threw myself at your head and you said you didn't want me."

Francis' shoulders and hands and eyes went upward together into an eminently French gesture. "What a horror!" he cried. "What an unbecomingly manner to recollect that talk! How can you? How can you be so brutal to me?"

Both of them, at that, burst into light-hearted laughter. Lucy was grave suddenly.

"But you have something to ask me, Francis. You spoke of your playmate—beautiful Alix."

"It is only you whom I could ask to do this, Mademoiselle Lucy. I have never told anyone else about her. Only you know of"—the words came slowly—"of my love for her. She does not know it. Alix does not know. And I may be killed, one sees, in this fight for the prince. Quite easily. And Alix will not know. I do not like that. In fact I cannot bear it. So this is what I ask of you, dear mademoiselle. He brought out a letter and held it to her. "If you hear that I am killed, will you send it to Alix?"

Lucy took the letter and turned it over doubtfully. "I do not like this sort of post-mortem commission, Francis. I feel as if I were holding your death-warrant."

"But it is not a bit of writing I shall meet my finish, mademoiselle. I promise not to die one minute sooner for that letter. It is only that it will make me happy to know you will send it."

So Lucy, holding the letter gingerly, agreed. But as Francis rose to go she stood by him a moment and laid her hand on his coat sleeve. "Francis—I want to tell you something."

"But yes, mademoiselle—yes, Lucy."
"It is something wrong."
"Yes—Lucy."
"I am going to tell Harry I said it."

"Yes."

"This is it, then"—and Francis, smiling, waited and there was deep silence in the big, cool, quiet drawing-room for as long as a minute. "This is it, then. I don't know how I can be so unreasonable—but I am. I love Harry—I am happy. But I am quite—jealous of Alix. And I think you are the most wonderful person I have ever known. If there had been no Alix; if you had—liked me—I can imagine having adored you. I do adore you, Francis. Now, how is all that compatible with my joy in marrying Harry? I don't know how it is—but it is so. I am a wicked selfish person—but it is so."

The next time Lucy Hampton saw Francis it was when, white-robed and sweet in her enveloping mist of veil she went up the chancel steps of the little Virginia country church, and looking up not a smile that was a benediction from the man whom she had loved, who stood close now at the side of her lover, her husband.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Prince's Bright Shadow.
There are old people living in England today who remember hearing their fathers and mothers speak of a young Frenchman of uncommon personality, constantly seen with Prince Louis Napoleon during the last days of his life in London in the year 1840. Lady Constance Cecil nicknamed this Frenchman "the prince's bright shadow." There seemed to be a closer tie than brotherhood between them, and the tradition runs that the

prince had a superstition that his luck went with him in the person of the Chevalier Beaupre.

It was all as it should be; he was entirely happy. He had asked three wishes of the good fairies, as he had said long ago; that the prince should be emperor—that he might become a marshal of France under another Bonaparte—that Alix should love him. The first two he believed about to be realized. The last? It was not now the time to think of that. Alix had kissed him good-by. That would more than do till the fight was over. So he sped back to London, missing Pietro, but hopeful and buoyant. And in London there was a letter for him from Virginia.

"Dear Francis," Lucy began. "To think that the first letter sent to you by Harry's wife should be to tell you that she has betrayed your trust in her. I am distressed beyond words, for I have made a mistake which may mean distress to you. You remember the letter to Alix which you trusted to me to send in case anything should happen to you? I had it in my hand the week after my wedding when I had gone upstairs to get other letters for Europe which my father had commanded me to send by the next packet. And in some stupid unexplainable way I slipped yours—your precious letter—among them in place of one to my father's agents in London, and I hurried down and gave the parcel to Sambo, who was waiting to ride to Norfolk with them. And then Harry and I went away on a visit to Martin's Brannon for three days, and it was only when I came back that I discovered the dreadful mistake I had made. Can you ever forgive me? Harry and I thought over every possibility of stopping it, but there seemed to be no chance. Are you very angry with me, dear friend of Harry's and of mine?"

The letter went on with reproaches and regrets and finally slipped into a tale of a new happy life which Francis had made possible for the two.

He read it over several times. His letter to Alix, which should have been sent only after his death, had gone to her. What then? She would know that he loved her; that he had loved her always; that he would love her forever; that the one wish of his life had been that she should love herself—not Pietro. He had said that in the letter; that was all. He was glad that she should know, though he would never have told her in life. It was done and he would find out now if Pietro indeed cared for her, if she cared for Pietro. And if not, then one had waited long enough; then at last—the joy of the thought choked him.

A knock came at the door of the room in the London lodging where he sat with Lucy Hampton's letter before him. Fritz Rickenbach stood there; his highness would like to see the chevalier. All personal thoughts were locked swiftly into the drawer with Lucy's letter and "the prince's bright shadow" went to the prince.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Third Wish.

On the day when Francis in London read that letter of Lucy Hampton's which had awaited his return from France, a letter from Lucy Hampton reached Alix at the Chateau of Vicoque. She carried it to Pietro's room where he sat in a deep chair at a window which looked over Delesmontes valley and the racing Cheulte river, and the village strung on the shores. His elbow on the stone window-sill, his chin in his hand, he stared at the familiar picture.

Alix, coming in without knocking at the open door, stepped across and stood by him, and he did not lift his head, his listless eyes did not yet shift their gaze from the broad landscape.

"But it is not a bit of writing I shall meet my finish, mademoiselle. I promise not to die one minute sooner for that letter. It is only that it will make me happy to know you will send it."

So Lucy, holding the letter gingerly, agreed. But as Francis rose to go she stood by him a moment and laid her hand on his coat sleeve. "Francis—I want to tell you something."

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in being out and about, and then—then in a minute you will be well again."

"Oh, yes," Pietro answered without animation. "It will not be long before I am well."

"Look, Pietro," Alix held out the paper in her hand. "Such a queer letter! From Virginia. From the little Lucy Hampton of whom Francis talks. I don't understand it. Will you let me read it to you?"

"Surely," said Pietro, and waited with his unsmiling eyes on her face.

"My dear mademoiselle," Alix read. "I am writing to beg your forgiveness, as I have begged that of the Chevalier Beaupre, for the very great fault I have committed. The chevalier trusted to me a letter for you which was to have been sent you only in case of a certain event; by a carelessness which, unmeant as it was, I shall never forgive myself. I gave it with other letters to our negro Sambo to be posted at once. By now it may have reached you. I cannot tell if I have made trouble or not, but in any case, I cannot rest without saying to you—as well as to the Chevalier—how sorry I am. If you can find it in your heart to forgive me, please do so, dear mademoiselle. That I should have made trouble for one as dear to me as the chevalier as you are is a deep grief to me. He has talked to me of you, with a very earnest prayer again for your forgiveness. I am, mademoiselle, yours faithfully and sincerely—Lucy Hampton."

Pietro looked bewildered. "What is it about?" he asked.

"I wonder," and Alix laughed and frowned at the paper in her hand. "It seems Francis wrote me a letter and left it with little Mistress Hampton to be sent 'in case of a certain event.' What event? What a strange thing for Francis to do! And then he came to us here and said nothing of mysterious letters left cooking in Virginia. I cannot make it out, Pietro—can you?"

"Not I," said Pietro.

"The letter of Francis has not come; that is certain; I wonder if the negro Sambo lost it."

"Probably," Pietro said. "It should have come before this one, otherwise."

"It is a riddle," Alix decided, "and I never guess them." Then, dropping into a seat on the wide window-sill, "Pietro—you are letting yourself be depressed."

The gray eyes met hers with something that seemed a wall of reserve in their steady glance. "I think possibly I may have no exercise," he said.

"I will feel more natural when I can get about."

Alix looked at him. "You are eating your heart out to be with Francis," she said, and laid her hand on his.

Pietro stared as if the light touch had shaken him; then slowly his large fingers twisted lightly around the small ones, and he turned his face again, holding her hand so, to the window and the view of the valley and the river and the village. A moment he sat so, the girl's hand loose in the hollow of the man's; a slow red crept into Alix's face; there was confusion in her brain. She had laid her hand on that of her brother; her brother had taken it in his—and behold, a witchcraft it was all changed. This delicate bit grasp that held her was not brotherly; through all her veins suddenly she knew that, the flesh shot up to her eyes, to her forehead, and she tried, with an attempt at an every-day manner, to draw her hand away. But Pietro, his set pale face toward the window, his eyes gazing out, held her hand. With that the world had reeled and was whirling past her. Pietro had caught both her hands in a tight grip and had drawn them against him, was holding them there, was looking at her with a face which was not even she, this time, might mistake.

"Alix," he said, "I know you don't care for me. I know you love Francis. I did not mean ever to speak, but when you put your hand on mine—"

He held her palms together and parted the palms and kissed the fingertips, first of one and then of the other, as if he kissed something holy.

"I shall never speak again, but this once I will. I always loved you—one must. I knew always that a slow silent person like you would have no chance against a fellow like Francis. So I have kept still, and it was hard. It won't be so hard now that you know. Are you angry, Alix?"

Alix, with her head bent so that Pietro did not see her face, with her head bending lower—lower, suddenly was on her knees by the chair and her face was on Pietro's arm.

"Alix," he whispered, "what is it—what have I done?"

But the brown waves of hair with the blue ribbon tied around them lay motionless on his arm. And suddenly a thought shook him.

"It cannot be!" he gasped.

And Alix lifted her face, and the exaggerated black lashes lifted, and the blue glance lifted and rested on Pietro's black hair bent down where the light shone on the silver lines through it. Up flashed her hand impulsively, gently—as Alix did things, and touched the thick lock with an infinitely delicate caress. "Your hair—is all turning gray," she whispered in two quick breaths, and at that, in some occult fashion Pietro knew.

For moments they had no need of that makeshift language; the great house was very quiet, and one heard the horses stamping in the paved courtyard and the rooms singing, and yet one did not hear it. Distant sounds came from the village, but one only knew that long after, in remembering that morning. All they knew was that the ghost of a lifelong affection of brother and sister stood before them, changed by a miracle to a shining angel into whose face, for these first moments, they dared not look. Then slowly, exquisitely, courage came and, hand close in hand, they looked at each other astonished, glad. It was Pietro and Alix still, the ancient playfellows, the childhood friends—all the dear familiarity was there yet, but no longer were they brother and sister. And then, after a while they began to compare notes of things hidden.

"When did you begin—to like me—this way, Pietro?"

"I don't know," answered Pietro stupidly. "Does it make any difference?"

"A great deal," Alix insisted. "It's important. It's historical."

"But this isn't history," said Pietro.

Alix, however, returned to the charge. "Last year?"

"Last year—what?" Pietro asked; he had already forgotten the question. "Oh—that I began to—mon dieu—no. Last year! Why, I think it was the day I came and saw you riding Coq."

"Oh, Pietro—if you will talk only nonsense!" Alix's voice was disappointed. "But why, then, didn't you ever say so before this? We are both a thousand years old now. If you—loved me"—she spoke the word in a lower voice—"why, then, were you as quiet as a mouse about it all these years?"

"I thought you cared for Francis," Pietro said simply. And added, "Didn't you?"

Alix considered. "I don't think I ever did, Pietro. Not really. I thought I did perhaps. He dazzled me—Francis—with his way of doing all sorts of things brilliantly, and that wonderful something about him makes everybody love him. He believed in his star; there was around him the romance of the emperor's prophecy and the romance of the career which, we believe, about to begin now; there was always a glamour about Francis."

"Yes," Pietro agreed. "The glamour of his courage, Alix, of loyalty and unselfishness; the qualities which make what people call his charm. Francis is unlike the rest of the world, I believe, Alix."

Pietro talked on, the silent Pietro, as if delivering a lecture. He had read much and thought much; it was self-delusion.

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how he cared for it himself, but because it was the Emperor's prophecy."

"I always thought," Pietro spoke slowly, "that it was not indeed for himself that he wished to be a Marshal some day, but because it might make him, in a manner, your equal. It was for you."

"For me!" Alix was astonished. "I never thought of that. I think you thought of it, Pietro, only because you—cared for me—and thought Francis must care also."

"Yes, I thought he cared," Pietro considered. "I cannot believe otherwise yet."

"You may believe it," Alix was firm. "For he said that what he had wished always was that I should—love you. I did it mostly to please Francis," she added serenely.

And Pietro's response to that was apt, but not to be given here. The minds of these two happy lovers were full of that third who had been so close always, to each of them.

"Pietro," Alix spoke earnestly, coming back to the same subject, "you know that I love Francis—of course. But you do not know in what way. I love him as if he were one of the saints—but also as if he were a helpless little child. Yet not—Pietro—as if he were—the man I love. I would give my life for him in a rush of delight, if he needed it. But I know now, whatever were my vague dreams in past years, that it is not in Francis to care for a woman as a human man."

"I am not so sure," said Pietro, and shook his head.

"You know I am not abusing our Francis," Alix protested. "Why, Pietro, my father believes, and I believe, that if affairs should so happen that he has his opportunity he may yet be one of the great characters in history. My father says he is made up of inspirations, illuminations—and limitations."

"Yes," said Pietro thoughtfully. "He has the faults of brilliancy and fearlessness. He judges too rapidly. If he were afraid ever—if he saw the other side of a question ever, his judgment would be safer. It may well happen that he will be one of the great men of Europe; it may also happen that by some single act of mismanagement he will throw away his career—or his life. God keep him safe!" Pietro said simply.

And Alix echoed it—"God keep him safe!" And then, "I am going to write him, Pietro—about us. My father knows where to reach him at Boulogne. I am going to say just a word—that what he has wished for all his life is true. It will get to him the night before the battle."

"Are you sure you are right, Alix?" Pietro asked doubtfully.

"Sure," said Alix bravely.

"Give him my love, then," said Pietro.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The Night Before.

Out in the dark, in the harbor of Boulogne, the ship Edinburgh Castle lay rocking in the wind. Prince Louis Bonaparte, who had chartered her, and the handful of his followers who had sailed with him on her from England had disembarked quietly at twilight, and in small companies had succeeded in entering the town and the quarters of the officers who were, in France, the nucleus and the hope of their attempt. In the rooms of Lieutenant Aladenize, the host of the Prince, a short council had been held to go over once more the plans which had been discussed and settled by letter for weeks already; there was almost nothing to be changed, and the little company of men who were trying so large a fate, scattered, with grave faces, with quiet good nights to the Prince who might tomorrow be their Emperor, to the Prince for whose sake they might tomorrow night be any or all ruined men or dead men.

He sat erect and listened. The hall was brushing clothes with energy in the bedroom, and through another door there came a light sound of a paper turned, of a gay song sung softly. And a glow suddenly warmed the Prince's heart; here was some one who had known his mother, who had been, indeed, for a few days her son; here was some one who cared for him, he believed it, with a half-consuming flame of devotion. Since the man's arrival from Virginia six weeks before, to have him near himself had been a pleasure to Louis Bonaparte; he seemed to bring back the freshness of his early days, of the young confidence when his star shone for him, distant perhaps, but undimmed by the